

Water-Colors On A Pond

There was a pond in the king's garden,
Tiled with blue porcelain and filled with
Golden carp, which grew to a certain size,
And no larger.
Years passed, and the pond grew murky
With algae. A brown scum crawled over
The blue porcelain; lilies took root
And sent up slender stems to float
Broad green pads and yellow blossoms.
The golden carp swam in the cool brown water,
Growing older but no bigger,
Their bodies wise to limits.

The water-skin reflected the sky,
Its brown depths backing a mirror
Of white clouds, blue zenith,
Across which faintly golden shadows slid
And water-striders skimmed.
Dragon-flies and damselflies
And caddisflies and mayflies,
Mosquitoes and water-boatmen,
Whirligigs and frogs bequeathed
Their generations here.
The porcelain cracked and moisture oozed
To the surrounding soil;
The feeding stream overspread its channel,
And cat-tails grew, and wild iris.

The king's son, skilled in engineering,
Came to the pond.
He groaned at the weed-choked,
Bug-ridden mess, and called for his
Tractors and dredgers and tilers.
The pond was restored to its pristine blue,
Its surface sprinkled daily with scientific pellets
Designed to maintain good health in fishes.
The golden carp swam in clear water
Over cool, blue porcelain, growing
Older but no bigger,
Their bodies wise to limits.

-- H. E. Turner

Seattle, WA